

**INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE  
ON FUNDRAISING ORGANIZATIONS**

ICFO – the association of  
national monitoring agencies



**INFORMATION – COORDINATION  
MONITORING – DONOR ADVICE**

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## History

ICFO started as the "International Committee on Fundraising Control" which was founded in 1958.

The present constitution was adopted in 1989 and the name was changed to "International Committee on Fundraising Organizations". ICFO was incorporated on September 10, 1990 under the laws of The Netherlands. Its legal seat is in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

ICFO is registered at the Council of Europe as a Non Governmental Organization with consultative status.

The ICFO office and general secretariat is based at Deutsches Zentralinstitut für soziale Fragen (DZI) in Berlin, Germany.

## Constitutional Objectives

"In order to give confidence to donors that donations are used for the purposes for which they are given, the objectives of the ICFO (...) shall be:

- i. to promote transparency and integrity related to the activities of donor supported non-governmental charitable organizations, within the European Union and other parts of the world,
- ii. to gather information from members and other sources, and exchange such information among members,
- iii. to formulate standards for non-governmental charitable organizations working internationally."

(article 2 of ICFO's Constitution)

## ICFO's Mission

The purpose of ICFO is to ensure that fundraising for charitable purposes is being organized and performed in a satisfactory manner and that the administration of the collected funds is adequate. ICFO and its Members look after the **interests of donors**.

Most voluntary sector organizations are honest and reliable. There are, however, a few which misuse the donors' money by directing it to activities other than for which it was raised and which deny their donors access to information about their financial activities. Such **dishonest activities are not acceptable**. This is where ICFO and its national Members can be of help.

The existence of meaningful and clear guidelines for fundraising activities as well as subsequent **independent monitoring** are in the best interest of trustworthy fundraisers as well as of their donors. ICFO's system for transparency adds **proof of seriousness and reliability** to the art of fundraising.

Fundraising organizations which are attached to one of the national ICFO Members are bound to follow the guidelines given in accordance with the respective national law and tradition. This may include **ethical guidelines for fundraising, principles for accounting, transparency, annual reports, public access, etc.**

**Being monitored and recommended by the national ICFO Member enhances a fundraising organization's potential by obtaining the additional trust which follows adherence to the ICFO standards.**

## Structure and Activities

The various national **ICFO Member organizations** are **independent entities** which are not identically organized, but which **operate for the same goal within differing national frameworks**. Some are based upon fundraising organizations themselves, others upon representation from other institutions, such as consumer organizations etc. Some operate with the authority to give fundraising organizations an official seal of approval for public fundraising – and to take it away.

Within this framework **ICFO's activities** are as follows:

- sharing information and experience among national monitoring organizations (Annual General Meeting);
- formulating standards for non-governmental charitable organizations working internationally;
- monitoring the international headquarters of those charities on a voluntary basis;
- helping in establishing new national monitoring agencies;
- providing information about the various national monitoring systems (ICFO Comparative Survey) and the activities of internationally working charitable organizations to businesses, foundations, governments, the media, and the general public.

For more information, please contact the ICFO General Secretariat or visit [www.icfo.de](http://www.icfo.de).

## ICFO International Standards

### Preamble

ICFO has developed a set of International Standards for good governance and management for international non-governmental, or not-for-profit, private organizations that directly, or indirectly through subsidiary bodies, raise funds from the public for charitable or public benefit purposes.

The Standards cover five key areas of activity:

- membership and responsibilities of the governing body;
- fulfilment of public benefit goals;
- fiscal control, management and reporting;
- fundraising practices;
- provision of public information.

In addition to these Standards, ICFO expects suitable guidelines to exist for public benefit organizations to ensure that the public, and recipients and donors, have ready access to sufficient and adequate information to enable them to make informed decisions about their relationships with the organization.

Further, these guidelines should be determined and administered by an independent non-governmental agency or function that is separate from governmental legal and taxation oversight.

Guidelines governing public benefit fundraising organizations should also require conformity with more rigorous and "best practice" standards for probity and good governance that go beyond the minimum national legal and audit requirements.

ICFO also expects fundraising public benefit organizations to present their accounts of income and expenditure in a common format to enable appropriate thresholds to be set for categories of expenditure and for meaningful inter-organizational comparisons to be made.

### Standard 1 – Membership and Responsibilities of the Governing Body

- 1.1 The governing body should consist of at least five people;
- 1.2 Persons serving on the governing body should:
  - 1.2.1 not receive remuneration for their service as board members;
  - 1.2.2 be independent and act in the best interests of the body;
  - 1.2.3 attend meetings regularly.

### Standard 2 – Public Benefit Goals

- 2.1 There should be a clear and consistent statement of the mission and aims of the organization in all public reports and fundraising materials;
- 2.2 Activities must be directed towards the attainment of the organization's stated public benefit goals.

### Standard 3 – Financial Responsibilities

- 3.1 Annual accounts must be prepared and audited by independent, professionally qualified auditors;
- 3.2 Expenses should be commensurate with the size and scale of activities of the organization and accord with the ethical ethos of public benefit bodies.

### Standard 4 – Fundraising Practices

- 4.1 Fundraising practices should be truthful, accurate and not misleading;
- 4.2 Fundraising costs should be limited to a reasonable proportion of the organization's overall expenditure and regularly tested for cost-effectiveness.

### Standard 5 – Public Information

- 5.1 Information about the organization's activities and results should be regularly prepared and made freely available to the public;
- 5.2 Information should be comprehensive and presented in easily understood formats;
- 5.3 Explanatory narrative information should be provided to assist understanding of the financial information and to enable appropriate comparisons to be made.

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